



Weekly Hot News Update

July 16, 2008

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On the Hill

Here's what we're tracking this week for EUCOM.

Bills of Interest:

HR 1585 - National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2008

- This bill would establish and fund counter-narcotics efforts in Afghanistan.
- Pocket vetoed by the President on December 31, 2007.
- Agreed to by a voice vote in the House on January 15.

HR 2003 - Ethiopia Democracy and Accountability Act of 2007

- This bill would encourage and facilitate consolidation of security, human rights, democracy, and economic freedom in Ethiopia. This would include counter terrorism and counter narcotics efforts.
- This bill was introduced in the House and referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.
- This bill was received in the Senate and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations, after passage in the House on October 3.

HR 2228 - Ethiopia Freedom, Democracy and Human Rights Bill

- Closely related to HR 2003 this bill would also encourage the development of Ethiopia while also implementing counter terrorism and counter narcotics efforts.
- This bill was introduced in the House and referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

HR 2446 - Afghanistan Freedom and Security Support Act of 2007

- This bill provides funding for programs to stabilize Afghanistan and counter the drug trade.
- This bill passed the House and was sent to the Senate, which referred it to the Committee on Foreign Relations. Star Print ordered July 17, 2007.

HR 2764 - Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008

- This bill includes appropriations for "international narcotics control and law enforcement."
- Became public law on December 26, 2007. Public Law No. 110-161.

Hearings of Interest:

July 15 @ 10:15am in 419 Dirksen - Senate Foreign Relations Committee, African Affairs Subcommittee hearing on "The Crisis in Zimbabwe and Prospects for Resolution."

Witnesses: Assistant Secretary of State Jendayi Frazer of the Bureau of African Affairs; Katherine Almquist, assistant administrator in the U.S. Agency for International Development's Bureau for Africa; Tom Melia, deputy executive director of Freedom House; and Michelle Gavin, adjunct fellow for Africa at the Council on Foreign Relations

July 5 @ 10:00am in 2154 Rayburn - House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, National Security and Foreign Affairs Subcommittee hearing on "AFRICOM (U.S. Africa Command): Rationales, Roles, and Progress on the Eve of Operations."

Witnesses: Deputy Assistant Defense Secretary for African Affairs Theresa Whelan; Mary Yates, deputy to the commander for civil-military activities (the top interagency official embedded in AFRICOM) and former ambassador to Ghana and Burundi; Maj. Gen. Michael Snodgrass, chief of staff for AFRICOM; Lauren Ploch, analyst in African Affairs at the Congressional Research Service; and John Pendleton, director of force structure and defense planning at the

Whispers from Congress:

While the legislative agenda for the remainder of the year will be highly limited (congressional leadership has in fact noted that the FY 09 budget process is essentially dead in the water), some inside the beltway have started to make preparations for life after the November elections. So far, one of the most vocal of these individuals has been Rep. Ike Skelton (D-MO), who has recently released several statements suggesting how U.S. defense strategy and focus should alter in the future. On July 10th and 11th, he released two of several planned press statements, both dealing with some possible directions for U.S. defense policy and strategy abroad. In his July 10th statement, he described what he feels to be a, “complete absence of a comprehensive strategy for advancing U.S. interests.” He also describes a lack of cohesion between all government sectors and national powers in addressing and tackling various problems that are critical or germane to U.S. strategic interests. Rep. Skelton suggests that a project similar to the “Solarium Project” in the Eisenhower Administration should be considered in order to establish a more robust and complete vision for addressing various international challenges and hurdles. The second installment, released on the 11th of July, did not give any concrete ideas but generally dealt with how the country sees itself on the international stage. Rep. Skelton also mentioned that “we must look clear-eyed beyond Iraq and Afghanistan,” indicating perhaps a sign of future agendas for congressional defense players. Rep. Skelton also touched on the challenges posed by China, India and Brazil as well as the ongoing threat posed by “transnational” elements. Again, the ideas advanced are in their early stages and aren’t going to contain any real specifics. However, look forward to similar statements being released in the near future as congress continues to prepare for a possible changing of the guard on the Hill and in the White House. Also, look for other voices of prominence in government starting to advance their own lines of thought regarding the strategic direction of the country. TCG will stay posted and listen for any minute details that may be of interest. Additionally, TCG will be attending a hearing on Tuesday, July 15th held by the House Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs. The hearing will focus on AFRICOM and is entitled, “AFRICOM: Rationales, Roles, and Progress on the Eve of Operations.”

Inside the Administration

From July 8th to July 10th, the U.S. DEA held its 26th International Drug Enforcement Conference (IDEC) in Istanbul, Turkey. The annual event pulls together hundreds of officials from counter-drug institutions around the world. At this year’s IDEC, over 300 officials attended and 93 countries were represented. It was also the first time Turkey hosted the event. Along with the designated location for the IDEC, the tone and priorities of the conference change from year to year. Interestingly, this year’s subject focus centered on a number of pressing topics including pharmaceutical abuse, money-laundering and intelligence and information sharing between multi-national law enforcement agencies. The conference also addressed the growing connections between drugs, organized crime and terrorism. Michelle Leonhart, the acting administrator for the U.S. DEA, provided a number of points in her opening statement to the conference. This year’s conference had nine new observer countries including Brunei Darussalam, Togo, Croatia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Laos, Liberia, Lithuania and Macedonia. New conference member nations include Greece, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, the UAE and Vietnam. A number of high-level attendees were present at the IDEC including ONDCP Dep. Director Scott Burns, SOUTHCOM commander Admiral James Stavridis, the Colombian National Defense Minister Juan Manuel Santos Calderon and Colombian National Police Director, Gen. Oscar Naranjo. Synthetic drug production in Asia, heroin and cocaine trafficking through Africa and the growing far-international reach of various drug cartels were highlighted in her remarks. Next year’s 27th annual IDEC will be held in Mexico, a country currently under immediate and heavy pressure from lethal drug-trafficking armies.

Washington Influences

The Jamestown Foundation has just published a timely article on the rapidly expanding connections between terrorism and the narcotics trade with a focused spotlight on the link between Afghan opium production and the Taliban insurgency. While these connections have been given increased attention within the last several years, (and particularly within the last few months) the article helps provide some of the more finite details regarding the Taliban/opium relationship. Not only are insurgents making colossal profits from the drug trade but the business automatically ensures expanded links with other underground players. Here, the trading ties between foreign organized criminal groups, particularly arms-traffickers, and the Taliban are especially acute. While Afghanistan is not the only region currently contending with a criminal/terror nexus, it certainly seems to be the most pronounced. The article also provides a brief historical overview of the Afghan drug trade, financial figures, internal dynamics and some of the more less-reported aspects of the Afghan opium racket. The article also addresses the larger economic factors affecting and promoting the trade. Most importantly, Afghanistan is noted a potential warning sign regarding the global drug trade and regions with limited law and order capacity and political instability.

To view the entire article please access the following link.

<http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2374293>

Around the Corner

The hearing held this week on AFRICOM by the House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs brings back to light the growing layers of opportunity and concern in Africa and other developing regions. While dealing simultaneously with both strategic interests and security concerns in specific regions of interest has always posed challenges, overlap between strategic interests and the impact of illicit drugs has never gained a large degree of attention. This, however, may appear to be changing. The direct threat posed to the Mexican government by drug cartels has perhaps helped to bring these concerns into clearer focus. Unfortunately, several African (and some Balkan) regions and countries have both strategic and economic interests (e.g. oil, energy, precious minerals, economic opportunity etc) and extreme security problems (e.g. disease, terrorism and political instability). It seems that the drug-trafficking problem, particularly in regions with both vital interests and security hurdles, has finally been recognized as posing a significant enough threat to U.S. interests on its own and thus may be gaining greater attention. Simply, in certain countries, raw material production, economic stability and other interests are directly at risk due to the presence highly capable, lethal drug cartels. Media sources have begun to link the drug threat posed to certain countries to the resources those countries contain; if not explicitly stated in the headline, the merging of these two themes in the text indicates that the narcotics trade in some countries is so potent that it could undermine or threaten the resource development and acquisition in those same countries. Recent articles making these connections abound. For example, a Reuters article from Jul 12th, 2008 makes a connection between the drug threat posed to Guinea and its massive bauxite reserves. A Bloomberg article July 1st, 2008 reported on the potential impact the drug trade could have on Bolivia's natural gas and petroleum industries. At the very least, nations severely affected by the drug scourge have to devote critical funding, time and resources to fighting narcotics which draws away from more positive and productive areas. Clearly, the strength of drug cartels and organized crime has become more than merely a side issue in countries on the U.S. scope of interest. It should also be added that most often, the drug trade poses the greatest threat to countries that also suffer from high-level political corruption, political instability, internecine conflicts, tribal warfare and organized crime. TCG will keep on the lookout for more data on these lines.

Selected News for EUCOM

- [EU Eyes Anti-drugs Centre for Mediterranean](#)
- [Nigeria's Navy Struggles with Attacks on Offshore Oil Facilities](#)
- [Police Nab Cocaine, but not Crooks in Unprecedented Bust](#)
- [Bauxite-exporter Guinea Faces Drugs Trade Threat-UN](#)
- [Sierra-Leone Police Arrest Drug Crew](#)
- [Iraq Emerging as Key Route in Global Drugs Trade](#)

The Lighter Side

Quote of the Week

"I've failed over and over and over again in my life and that is why I succeed."

- Michael Jordan

"We are masters of the unsaid words, but slaves of those we let slip out."

- Winston Churchill

Prediction of the Week

While there are rumors of a second economic stimulus package circulating through the halls of Congress, the Bush administration - while not opposed to another package - has requested time to see how well the first economic stimulus package works. Don't expect the second economic stimulus package to pass Congress before September.

Contact Us

<http://www.charlesgroupdc.com>
info@charlesgroupdc.com